

Like Electricity Over the Makombo Village

I.

You burn things. I don't.

To say you're eccentric I must ignore the animality of my grandmother
as she sucks on goat feet
or look away as my uncle urinates on the wall, legs straightened, nose clogged,
there's sameness between us.

This village, this sun-scorched land of lepers and burnt things,
of drought, of anger, of witches, of blackness found in the gutters,
blackness found in the skies, blackness dug up, blackness in black holes,
blackness in even blacker holes.

We're not associated with anything seen, want to be seen or touched
by the sun's daylight. Kony made me kill my grandmother
and then uncle. I don't know why sister choked as she hanged
herself dancing on stars. She swallowed her tongue.

A boy said she morphed into a mermaid when the ropes came off.

And neither the missionary nor the aunty can call for help no matter
how loud they drum on our bones. And there's nothing,
nothing you can do to pull out sanity from my mouth
other than starvation and leprosy for you burn things and I don't.

II.

Sometimes I miss the classrooms, the hurts, the sane ones, the missionaries, the lovers, the clowns
the dying ones, the cripples by the streets. Right behind the door of
madness the carnival is always loud. A revel of fighters and children of
malarial parasites. Laughable ticks sucking on their toes.

They can float belly up to the Congo river. The joy of flesh burnt, and bread soaked
like when you jumped into the Kagera River to swim for fun.

The hours go by quickly, very quickly.

Before October the coconut trees perked up. In December the men arrived.

By the second Monday I killed my grandmother. On Tuesday my uncle.

Then came the New Year.

Time is fast when the crazies come by
like mangos falling to the earth.

The blackness is buried in the deep because

in this black village
there's never enough.

In this black village
the animals are us.

In this black village

we get bored because

when the real night comes, we stay in the church.

The witches and ghosts won't step in there.

You won't look for us in there.

You won't look for us in there.

The love-whispers, the secrets, the biting, the fighting, the whistling.

We make bizarre sounds. But you won't hear us. We sing strange music.

But you won't hear us. My brother's mattress, the rag, the cockroach,
you must find me, but you won't because you burn things and I don't.

III.

Here there are only forty-nine names, a pile of guns, things that are mine.

You told me there's light in your city, little lamps, little bulbs on the ceiling.

Currents traveling from city to city over plains over rivers
and your spirit is close to naked.

To run off.

As the guards are panga-men with baboons, with pythons, I would be a lost-child
a refugee-child
a dead-lost-refugee-child.

They will grab me, beat me, kill me—no kidding, kill me—while loving me.

And if I saw you again, I might ask for a pen. I might write rain. I might write happy.

I might write free. I might write things. I might write currents or electricity.

In your native language of course.

You can teach me

the stars are not just meant to be looked at.

The trees sing songs too

not just the jays or the falcons.

You can teach me to burn things.

IV.

The dead rises from the floors of the church, blue, yellow, purple, with rotten
guts they wear human skin.

The great delirium of wars,

flesh of man's mental state and above all the death of my grandmother and uncle.

These deaths without hesitation, without sound, so pathetic it falls short of any sadism from sadism
to sadism, of greed over a woman, a child, the shovels of my other self, these unmuted souls scream
all the deaths so fruitless.

Absurdities done under daylight,

consciousness cut open with tragic

futilities

lit by narcotics

and I and I

am an apocalypse of beasts and nightmares.
I'm a boy
longing to see electric currents
in your city.

V.

Kony likes death.
Kony never breathes.
Kony rides into the village
like a man.
Kony has eyes of a cat.
Kony is a falcon.
Kony eats a lot.
Kony kills a lot.
Kony doesn't lie
like other men lie.
He doesn't burn things either.

And you know that boys make good soldiers
that 7 times 7 is useless
that the woman is burning
that the sky is nameless
that there's fire behind the moon.

VI.

From walking with men, I have become a man.
From talking to the dead, I have become insane.
I am now a boy-prophet
where the lightning strikes I go.
The waters, the greenish-dead ground is where the angels gather to commune.
Men go elsewhere. Killers are on the wild edge. I declare the world is filled with
electricity. We are filled with electricity. The animals are filled with electricity.

The signboard reads FIND ME HERE! WE ARE HERE! 7 TIMES 7 IS USEFULL!
BURN US BRIGHT!
This is signed by Greatman Magunda.
This was also signed by Beatrice—one of the aunties
before she jumped into the Kagera river.

VII.

I have assassinated the witch. Conjured up dead birds. Compelled thunderstorms
to fall and the rivers to divide. Me in the church, a boy biting down on yam roots,
the man who called my name and the woman writing down a hundred names, names of rivers,
names of cities, names of lovers, names of colors, names of dead boys, names of black boys.

What should I call you?

Savior.

Father.

You must be searching the
ends and beginnings of lands
electrified with dirty bodies.

THERE'S AN OUTAGE IN THIS CITY!

the new signboard reads and I
and I
will choose how to die in this bright bright world.